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FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISHU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7339
INFO USIA WASHDC 7409
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AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
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AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RIYADH
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SANAA
AMCONSUL JEDDAH
USMISSION GENEVA
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//POLAD//CCJ2/CCJ4/7-S/CCJ5//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOGADISHU 02527

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
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SUBJECT: PEACE BREAKING OUT IN THE NORTH?

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: EXHAUSTED BY FRATRICIDE AND WEAKENED BY HUNGER, FEUDING TRIBES IN NORTHWEST SOMALIA MAY AT LAST BE READY TO MAKE PEACE AMONG THEMSELVES, WITH SNM, AND WITH GSDR. SOMALI ARMY "WARLORDS" IN THE NORTH HAVE ALREADY WITHDRAWN FROM THE FRAY TO DEVOTE THEMSELVES TO BUSINESS DEALS, AND SNM COMMANDERS HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO SIMILAR ENTERPRISES TO KEEP FROM STARVING. RESIDUAL FIGHTING IS LITTLE MORE THAN INTER-TRIBAL RAIDING. OUR SOURCE SAYS EVERYONE IS READY TO LAY DOWN ARMS AND PEACE TALKS ARE SPROUTING LIKE MUSHROOMS. END SUMMARY.

3. COLONEL OMAR ABDULLAHI HANDE, A GADABOURSI (FROM BORAMA) CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH ARMED FORCES COMMANDER GENERAL "MASLAH", CALLED ON AMBASSADOR ON HIS RETURN FROM SIX WEEKS IN NORTHWEST SOMALIA MARCH 12. HE TOLD US HE HAD JUST MADE FOLLOWING POINTS IN A REPORT TO PRESIDENT SIAD:

-- PROFITEERING "WARLORDS" HAD TAKEN FULL CHARGE OF SOMALI ARMY FORCES STATIONED IN THE NORTHWEST. HE FOUND NONE/NONE PROSECUTING THE WAR AGAINST SNM. INSTEAD, ALL SENIOR COMMANDERS WERE DEVOTING THEMSELVES ENTIRELY TO BUSINESS DEALS, SELLING SOLDIERS' RATIONS, FUEL, AND AMMUNITION TO BOTH SNM AND TRIBAL FIGHTERS.

-- FIGHTING NOW GOING ON WAS CONDUCTED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY BY TRIBAL MILITIAS OR "FRONTS" AND WAS AIMED AT PRESERVING TRIBAL TERRITORIES, HERDS, WATERHOLES, AND GRAZING AREAS AGAINST ENCROACHMENTS BY OTHERS (OFTEN BUT NOT ALWAYS SNM). SOLDIERS BELONGING TO LOCAL CLANS HAD DESERTED THEIR UNITS AND SHED THEIR UNIFORMS IN ORDER TO FIGHT ALONGSIDE TRIBAL BROTHERS; THOSE FROM OUTSIDE THE REGION HAD SIMPLY WITHDRAWN TO TOWNS TO WAIT OUT THE WAR.

-- TRADE IN GUNS AND AMMUNITION HAD BECOME HIGHLY PROFITABLE FOR ARMY OFFICERS, SINCE BOTH SNM AND ALLIES AND THEIR TRIBAL OPPONENTS WERE BIDDING UP PRICES. COMMANDERS WERE ALSO PROFITING FROM DESERTION OF THEIR TROOPS BY SIMPLY POCKETING SALARIES.

-- MANY DISPLACED PERSONS (I.E. ISAAKS) WOULD HAVE RETURNED HOME LONG AGO HAD THEY NOT BEEN DETERRED FROM DOING SO BY BOTH/BOTH SNM AND GOVERNMENT FORCES. GROWING NUMBERS WERE NOW RETURNING, BECAUSE AUTHORITY ON BOTH SIDES HAD PRACTICALLY COLLAPSED AND ISAAKS, SUFFERING FROM THIRST, HUNGER, DISEASE, AND ABOMINABLE CAMP CONDITIONS, WERE DEMANDING TO GO HOME.

-- AMONG THEMSELVES, TRIBAL LEADERS -- REALIZING THEY HAD BECOME VICTIMS AND PAWNS IN THE WAR BETWEEN SIAD AND SNM --

WERE NEGOTIATING PEACE AGREEMENTS ON ALL SIDES. ISAAKS OF HABR TOLJALQ AND HABR YUNIS CLANS HAD SIGNED A TRUCE WITH DOLBAHANTA FROM LAS ANOD. ISAAKS FROM HARGEISA AND BORAMA HABR AWAL WERE SUING QADABOURSI FOR PEACE ALONG THEIR COMMON TERRITORIAL BORDER EAST OF BORAMA. A SIMILAR AGREEMENT BETWEEN GADABOURSI AND ISSA APPEARED WITHIN REACH.

-- CLOSURE OF DJIBOUTI-BORAMA HIGHWAY HAD BADLY HURT COMMUNITIES ALONG THAT ROAD AND FORCED PRICES SKY HIGH IN BORAMA. A 50 KILO BAG OF RICE NOW COST MORE THAN 80,000 SO.SH., OR ABOUT TWELVE TIMES THE PRICE OF AN AVERAGE GOAT. HOWEVER, GADABOURSI IN BORAMA HAD ESTABLISHED ALTERNATIVE TRADE LINKS VIA BERBERA AND WERE RUNNING CONVOYS UNDER ARMED (NON-MILITARY) ESCORT FOUR TIMES A MONTH, CARRYING LIVESTOCK TO BERBERA PORT AND RETURNING WITH SUPPLIES OF FOOD. (COLONEL OMAR COMMENTED THAT IT WAS NOW DJIBOUTI ITSELF THAT WAS SUFFERING MOST FROM CLOSURE OF THE ROAD AND LOSS OF COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY.)

14. AMBASSADOR COMMENTED TO COLONEL OMAR HE HAD HEARD FROM PRIME MINISTER SAMANTAR THAT A PEACE AGREEMENT WITH SNM MIGHT BE CONCLUDED AS EARLY AS APRIL. OMAR SAID THIS WAS NOT/NOT BEYOND POSSIBILITY, AS THE SNM LEADERSHIP WAS ITSELF COLLAPSING, ITS FORCES HAD TAKEN SEVERAL SEVERE DEFEATS AT THE HANDS OF GADABOURSI AND OTHER TRIBAL "FRONTS" IN RECENT WEEKS, AND ISAAK ELDERS WERE PROBING FOR PEACE DEALS AMONG BOTH OTHER TRIBAL GROUPS AND GSDR ITSELF. SNM LEADERS WERE NO LONGER "TALKING SO TOUGH" AS THEY HAD BEFORE AND ARE SO DIVIDED THEY HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO HOLD THEIR SCHEDULED CONGRESS. INDEED, COLONEL OMAR SAID, THEY HAVE FALLEN INTO THE SAME HABITS AS SOMALI ARMY OFFICERS: USING TRUCKS DONATED BY ISAAK SUPPORTERS TO TRANSPORT KHAT AND FOR OTHER PRIVATE COMMERCIAL PURPOSES. GIVEN THIS SITUATION, PLUS SAMANTAR GOVERNMENT'S APPARENT DETERMINATION TO REACH AGREEMENT SOON IN ORDER TO HOLD ELECTIONS, COLONEL OMAR BELIEVED THAT SAMANTAR JUST MIGHT BE ABLE TO PULL IT OFF.

15. ONE INTERESTING SIDELIGHT: WITH THE EXHAUSTION OF NOMADIC FIGHTERS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER AND SOLDIERS FROM BOTH SIDES SELLING THEIR GUNS TO BUY FOOD, BIGGEST PURCHASERS OF WEAPONS HAVE TURNED OUT TO BE THE OROMO LIBERATION FRONT. OMAR POINTED OUT THAT THE OLF (WHICH COUNTS ON BACKING FROM SOME 22 MILLION OROMOS, OMAR SAID) NOW SEES AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MENGISTU'S SETBACKS AT THE HANDS OF ERITREANS AND TIGRAYANS AND HAVE SUDDENLY GROWN VERY AMBITIOUS.

16. COMMENT: COLONEL OMAR'S ASSIGNMENT, WE INFER, WAS TO INSURE THAT THE GADABOURSI AROUND BORAMA REMAIN FIRMLY ENROLLED ON THE SIDE OF THE GOVERNMENT (THEY ARE IN FACT SURROUNDED BY ANTI-GOVERNMENT ISAAK AND ISSA FORCES THAT HAVE BEEN TRYING UNSUCCESSFULLY TO BRING BORAMA TO ITS KNEES). OMAR SEEMS TO HAVE GONE BEYOND HIS ASSIGNMENT, HOWEVER, TO SURVEY THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL SITUATION GENERALLY IN THE NORTHWEST. HIS REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT HAS BOTH BAD NEWS AND GOOD NEWS: AN UTTERLY INEFFECTIVE AND CORRUPT SOMALI ARMY FORCE FACING AN EQUALLY INEFFECTUAL AND EXHAUSTED INSURGENCY. OMAR BELIEVES EVERYONE IS TIRED OF THE WAR NOW AND LOOKING FOR PEACE AND WE HOPE HE'S RIGHT. CERTAINLY PRIME MINISTER SAMANTAR IS COUNTING HEAVILY ON THE FATIGUE FACTOR, AS HE MOUNTS HIS RELIEF OPERATION FOR RETURNED ISAAKS IN BURAO AND PROMISES A PEACE AGREEMENT WITHIN TWO MONTHS. PERHAPS THERE IS LIGHT AT THE END OF THIS DREADFULLY LONG TUNNEL.

CRIGLER